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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: UK-BASED DIASPORA AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT  
IN SOMALIA

REF: LONDON 2084

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Known as the "invisible community," the UK's Somali Diaspora has historic roots in Britain but has surged significantly in the last twenty years to an estimated 250,000 to 380,000. With recent immigration increases attributed to family reunification and re-location of other EU-based Somalians to the UK, the UK's Diaspora community has settled largely along clan lines, with local communities generally dominated by one individual clan. There are no nationally recognized leaders in the Somali Diaspora, and individual communities tend to use intra-community dispute resolution (rather than British police and courts) and to forgo engagement with HMG. With one of the lowest rates of unemployment amongst British immigrants, the Somali Diaspora remits several hundred million USD to Somalia. Dahabshiil, the UK-based and world's largest Somali money transfer company, transfers roughly USD 230 million per annum. UK-based Somalians see these remittances as vital for the survival of their families, but also as a means to improve the Somalian economy. HMG has termed these remittances as a "boost against the fight against poverty in Somalia" and started programs to increase transparency and competition among money transfer companies. End summary.

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Size - 250,000 to 380,000  
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¶2. (SBU) Termed the UK's "invisible community" for lack of engagement with the national government and mainstream British culture, the UK has had a Somali Diaspora community from the time of the British Protectorate. However, the Diaspora's population has surged in the past twenty years to an estimated 250,000 to 380,000, according to Department for International Development (DFID) contractor and academic Mohamed Aden Hasan, who has recently completed a survey of the UK's Somali population for HMG. In recent years, Somalian immigration has changed from being based on asylum claims - Somalia was once one of the UK's top ten asylum applicant producing countries, according to Home Office statistics. In increasing numbers, Somalians new to the UK now arrive through family re-unification or immigration from other EU countries with less well established Somalian communities (mainly from the Netherlands and Scandinavia). Since 2001, over 50,000 Somalians have become British subjects, and 60 percent report having immediate family members still in Somalia or in refugee camps.

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Location - Living Along Clan Lines  
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13. (SBU) Seen as a meeting point by many EU-based Somalians, the UK hosts significant communities in Cardiff, Sheffield, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Leicester Manchester, and the Eastern and Western suburbs of London. Hasan reports that the Diaspora has largely settled based on clan affiliation, with one clan generally dominating an area and limited interaction between the communities. This clan-based settlement has produced some localized conflicts, with young Somalians forming gangs along tribal lines and involved in inter-tribe ethnic violence. These communities tend to use inter- and intra-community mediation processes rather than formal UK justice systems, such as the police or courts, to resolve disputes.

14. (SBU) Civil society and non-governmental organizations started by Somalians tend to serve only their individual communities. Local mosques and imams remain highly influential, but have no national affiliations or networks. According to Hasan's extensive survey, there are no national recognized leaders in the Somalia Diaspora or universally influential social groups. Other than a few Welsh MPs active in HMG on Somali issues (reftel), the Diaspora has extremely limited engagement with the central government and in national politics. The widely popular BBC Somali radio station, along with three other UK-based Somali language radio stations, one television station, and five weekly or monthly print publications, is the main source of information and principle social unifier for the community.

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Remittances - Several Hundred Million  
in USD Per Annum  
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15. (SBU) With one of the lowest rates of unemployment amongst Britain's immigrant communities, the Somali Diaspora provides several hundred million USD in remittances per annum. There are 11 UK-based money transfer companies serving Somalia. Dahabshiil is the world's largest, according to Managing Director Dr. Saad Shire. Dahabshiil has been in operation over twenty years and transfers roughly USD 230 million per annum among Somali communities, with 90 percent of transactions returning cash to Somalia. The company has over 170 agents based in the UK, and it has branch offices and agents throughout Somalia and in other countries with large Diaspora communities. Transfer fees range between two and five percent, based on the sum transferred.

16. (SBU) According to Hasan, UK-based Somalians see these remittances as vital for the survival of their families, but also as a means to improve the Somali economy. The Diaspora is primarily engaged in small private enterprises (like small grocery and goods shops and internet cafes) and the blue-collar service sector, largely due to lack of work experience, English language skills, and education.

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HMG Support  
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17. (SBU) With the March 2008 launch of its Somali-language consumer advice leaflets about the DFID-backed 'Send Money Home' independent money transfer price comparison website ([www.sendmoneyhome.org](http://www.sendmoneyhome.org)), DFID Minister for Africa Gillian Merron said remittances from UK-based Somalians are a "boost against the fight against poverty in Somalia." The research DFID contracted Hasan to complete on the Somalia Diaspora is meant to help DFID find ways to get the UK Diaspora more involved in Somalia's development.

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